

-건만

and yet, although

Contrast with a sigh in it. Where -지만 is neutral, -건만 carries disappointment that things did not follow as they should have.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Any verb or adjective	-건만	기다리다 → 기다리건만
Past	-았/었건만	기다렸건만
ㄹ stems keep the ㄹ	-건만	만들건만
Fuller form	-건마는	기다렸건마는
Second clause	the disappointment	아무 소식이 없다
Neutral version	-지만, -는데도	기다렸지만

WHEN TO USE IT

Attach -건만 to any stem — no vowel rule, ㄹ stays, and tense may appear in front: 했건만. The fuller form is 건마는.

The first clause states something that ought to have produced a result; the second reports that it did not: 그토록 기다렸건만 아무 소식이 없다.

The emotional colour is regret or lament. That is what separates it from -지만, which simply contrasts, and from -는데도, which is neutral concession.

The register is literary — poetry, fiction, elevated speech. It is not something you say to a colleague.

IN USE

- 1 그토록 기다렸건만 아무 소식이 없었다.
We waited so long, and yet no word came.
- 2 봄이 왔건만 마음은 아직 겨울이다.
Spring has come, and yet my heart is still in winter.
- 3 최선을 다했건만 결과는 달라지지 않았다.
We did our utmost, and still nothing changed.
- 4 여러 번 일렀건만 그는 듣지 않았다.
He was told again and again, and yet he would not listen.
- 5 정성껏 만들었건만 알아주는 이가 없다.
It was made with such care, and yet nobody appreciates it.

- 6 세월은 흐르건만 그리움은 여전하다.
The years pass, and yet the longing remains.

COMPARED WITH

-지만

-지만 contrasts two facts without comment; -건만 adds the sense that the second ought not to have followed.

기다렸지만 안 왔어요. (but he didn't come) / 기다렸건만 오지 않았다. (and yet he did not come)

-는데도

-는데도 concedes neutrally; -건만 laments. Same logic, quite different feeling.

노력했는데도 안 됐어요. (even though) / 노력했건만 되지 않았다. (and yet, alas)

-고도

-고도 points out a gap between action and behaviour, often critically; -건만 mourns an outcome that failed to arrive.

알고도 말 안 했어요. (knew and still) / 알렸건만 소용없었다. (told them, and yet)

WATCH OUT

X 그토록 기다렸건만 드디어 소식이 왔다.

O 그토록 기다렸건만 아무 소식이 없었다.

The second clause has to disappoint the expectation. A happy outcome contradicts the ending's tone.

X 야, 어제 기다렸건만 안 왔어.

O 야, 어제 기다렸는데 안 왔어.

-건만 is literary. In conversation it sounds like reciting a poem.

X 최선을 다하건만 결과는 달라지지 않았다.

O 최선을 다했건만 결과는 달라지지 않았다.

Unlike -기 and -도록, this ending does take tense, and a completed effort needs the past.